



File Code: 1950; 2400; 2600
Date: February 19, 2019

Dear Friends of the Clinch Ranger District:

The Clinch Ranger District of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests is seeking comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Turkey Cove Ruffed Grouse Habitat Improvement Project. The project proposes a series of actions to create and enhance optimal habitat for ruffed grouse and woodcock. The 4,400 acre project area is mostly within Lee County, Virginia southwest of the town of Big Stone Gap.

This proposal is needed because departure from the desired vegetation structure in the project area has led to a decline in the quality of ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat; less than one percent of the project area is within the early successional age range (age 1-10 years) needed. Current conditions include large tracts of contiguous mature forest in closed canopy conditions. The desired conditions describe a mix of forest communities with diverse composition and stocking contributing to the establishment of shrubs and grasses needed by ruffed grouse and woodcock. A mix of successional stages, including ten percent of the project area in early successional habitat, would be dispersed throughout.

Information on the proposed action and associated analysis documents can be viewed online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=37322>. The analysis documents may also be viewed at the Clinch Ranger District, 1700 Park Avenue SW, Norton, VA 24273.

To comment on this Proposed Action and Environmental Assessment, written and electronic formats will be accepted. Comments must be submitted by 30 days from date of the legal notice published in The Coalfield Progress. This notice is expected to be published on Friday, February 22, 2019. Only those who submit timely and specific comments during this comment period will be eligible to object. In order to file an objection, each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

Comments may be submitted via email to: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=37322>. Electronic comments may be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx), portable document files (.pdf), or in rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), or hypertext markup language (.html). Comments may also be mailed to Michelle Davalos, Clinch Ranger District, 1700 Park Avenue SW, Norton, VA 24273, or hand-delivered to the above address on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Please reference Turkey Cove Ruffed Grouse Habitat Improvement Project in the subject line.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record of this analysis and will be included in the final project record. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)



permits such confidentiality.

The District will host a public field trip to the project area on Tuesday, March 5, 2019. If you are interested in participating, please contact the District office at 276-679-8370 for more information.

If you have any questions concerning this project, please contact Shelby Williams, Project and Interdisciplinary Team Leader at (276) 679-8370 x237 or by email at shelbywilliams@fs.fed.us. If you have any questions concerning the objection process, please contact Chris Brown at (540) 953-3570 or by email at christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



MICHELLE W. DAVALOS
District Ranger

cc: Joby Timm, Elizabeth LeMaster, JoBeth Brown, Troy Morris